

# The Western Seminary Bulletin

## REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

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HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

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### The Good News

JACOB PRINS

"FOR God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

What a word! It speaks of the greatest living Being — God, the greatest thing in the world — love, love's greatest degree — so loved, the greatest company — the world, God's greatest gift — His only begotten Son, man's greatest opportunity — that whosoever believeth in Him, the greatest promise — should not perish, and the greatest certainty and possession — have everlasting life. It opens with the theme of divine love; it closes with the assurance of divine life.

*Divine Love Expressed.* It is declared to be universal — its object being "the world." No one must be denied the Good News which tells of that love. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Good News." The Gospel is to be told to all mankind. John says: "We have known and believed the love that God hath toward us." Have you?

God's love is inconceivable — hence the use of the word "so." Paul prays to know the love of God and then goes on to say that it "passeth knowledge." It is immeasurable. Words fail to comprehend it. "God so loved."

God's love is real. "He gave His only begotten Son." It found its expression in the gift of that which cost Him the most and that which suited our need the best. "He spared not His own Son . . . He delivered Him up for us all . . . But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Calvary is the highest, surest, fullest, grandest expression of the love of God.

*Divine Life Possessed.* "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is what man lost through sin. We distinguish between life and existence. Adam

still existed after he had sinned against God; and, lest he live forever, he was put forth from the garden. Life is union with God and that is what man lost. Having no union with God, he could have no communion; fellowship was gone. "Death by sin" was separation from God. But "death for sin" by Christ on Calvary opened the way for union with God again. And this gift of life is "everlasting." There will be no breaking in upon it this time; union with God is beyond severing; it is "everlasting."

Divine life is our blessed assurance! "Should not perish." The sins of believers have all been accounted for and atoned for by Him on Calvary. Man never deserved life; it is the gift of God's grace. Man will never deserve to have it; it is God's provision for all who believe on His Son, all who in true faith receive Him Who "bare our sins, in His own body, on the tree."

Divine life possessed is preventive. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish . . . That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." Why doubt our Lord's words for one moment? The contrast is set before us in the illustration of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. Those serpent-bitten Israelites were in danger of perishing; but God in His mercy made provision to save these Israelites. "Whoso looketh upon it shall live." They did live, but not forever; they died later. Now hear our Lord. "And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal (everlasting) life . . . He that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die."

What a Gospel to preach! What Good News to proclaim! Tell it out; spread it abroad; make it known everywhere. Receive it; believe it; accept it; rest upon it.

## The Western Seminary Bulletin

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### SEMINARY HIGHLIGHTS

**D**URING the week of January 12 the seminary family received inspiration and a new insight into the missionary problems and challenges of our own land when Mrs. Harold Brinig of New York City, President of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, visited the campus. On Monday evening she spoke to the Adelpia, made up of wives of seminary students, at the home of Professor Mennenga. She also addressed the classes in the Philosophy and Methodology of Christian Missions and the student body as a whole during the following two days.

Dr. John E. Kuizenga, past president of the Seminary and Professor Emeritus of Princeton Seminary, is presenting a series of lectures on "The History of the Cults in America" for the entire student body.

In January the Seminary was privileged to meet Mr. Samuel A. Fulton, West Allis, Wisconsin, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. He was accompanied by his pastor, the Rev. James P. Lytle of the West Allis U. P. Church. Mr. Fulton spoke at the regular chapel service on the topic, "Christian Trademarks."

The seminary family was a guest of the Board of Education at a dinner the evening of February 3. Dr. J. Christie Innes, Executive Secretary of the American Tract Society, addressed a public meeting that evening and the following morning spoke to the student body during the chapel period.

Under the coaching of Middler James Muddle a seminary basketball team is competing in the intramural series at Hope College. Although they are far from the top of the league they are doing well, considering the amount of time available for practice and the limited number of players on the team. All the students have full use of Carnegie Gymnasium on Saturday afternoons for volley ball and basket ball.

In January the Rev. Howard Teusink, '40, now pastor of the Bethel Church in Sheldon, Iowa, read a revealing paper on the pastor's role in marital counselling before the faculty and students of the school.

The opening of the new semester found three new students in residence. They are Arend Johan Nijk, Karel Hanhart and Roelof van Reenen, all exchange students from the Netherlands. Mr. Nijk's home is at Meppel and he studied at the State University of Groningen. Mr. Hanhart is from Heemstede near Haarlem and spent some time at the City University of Amsterdam while Mr. van Reenen calls Soestdijk, Utrecht, his home and studied at the Free University of Amsterdam.

The Adelpia Society meets with Mrs. Bastian Kruithof weekly for a series of studies on "The Mistress of the Manse." The seminary wives have formed a very active group for mutual benefit and fellowship and add much to the friendly spirit of the seminary group.

The school was richly rewarded by a visit of Dr. Joseph Sizoo, President of New Brunswick Seminary, who ably presented the Bussing Series of Lectures for the current year. His topics were: "The Preacher in History," "The Preacher and His Age," "The Preacher and His Gospel," and "The Preacher and Himself."

The student body maintains a high degree of interest in the missions program of the church. In January Dr. John Piet, '39, missionary to our field in India, presented a most informative illustrated lecture on the Hindu religion and philosophy. During his furlough he has been working for a doctorate in this field at Columbia University. In March the Rev. John D. Muyskens spoke to the student body on the contemporary situation in India and its effect upon Christian missions.

# The Unity of the Church

RICHARD C. OUDERSLUYS

THE distress of the Christian Church in the world today comes to sharpest focus in its tragic brokenness. This broken character of the Church is readily apparent in its visible form, message and witness, but is even more deep-seated and far-reaching than these things would appear to indicate. The brokenness of the Church is an outward symptom of an inner spiritual distress, a failure to realize the true nature of the Church. It is inconceivable that we should not be greatly concerned about the disunity of the Church. Just the gravity of its distress ought to concern us. There is no distress quite like that of a broken body. Moreover, it concerns us directly. We cannot view disunity dispassionately, in spectator-like fashion, because every Christian believer is an actor in this tragedy, playing a larger or a smaller role. As living members of the broken body, we ourselves suffer this distress, and are engaged either in the healing or the aggravating of it.

It is not always appreciated that the disunity of the Church is to be found on two levels, that of the churches in their relationships to one another, and that of the local congregation as a worshiping community. The first is the distress of the Church from the viewpoint of its concrete existence. Various churches, denominations and sects have come into existence through a variety of causes, geographical, social, political and theological. That some exist for good reason and have historical justification is not contested here. Some churches, although existing as distinctly separate denominational bodies, are really "sister churches," representing approximately the same polity, creeds and doctrinal affirmations. Denominationalism, however, as we see and know it can only be regarded as tragically sinful. It is the collective guilt of the churches, and the individual guilt of Christian believers. If we are sincere in our affirmation that the Church is a divine fellowship, we should be greatly oppressed at the sight of believers in the one Body of Christ, opposing and excommunicating one another in contradictory fashion. The healing of the broken and lacerated Body of Christ is a task of such magnitude and difficulty, that many Christians allow themselves to be daunted by it into a do-nothing and say-nothing attitude. The task calls for much sacrifice and wisdom, but we must work at it, slowly and patiently, and very prayerfully.

It is a serious mistake, however, to confine our concern for the disunity of the Church to the problem of the churches in their historical existence. The more serious disunity of the Church is in the local congregation. It is here that we see the basic failure to achieve true Christian unity. It is in the worshiping congregation that we see most vividly the absence of concern for genuine Christian community, and an absence of shame and guilt for the brokenness of Christendom. The disunity of the Church is reflected not only in schism and denominationalism, but in the absence of the *Koinonia* (the Fellowship) in local Christian congregations. Within our own denomination, local congregations often manifest no spirit of concern for or participation in the life and work of our Reformed Church as a whole. And what is even more frequent is the unawareness in the congregations of the oneness of the Church Universal. Every minister and congregation ought to discover their particular predicament by frequently asking the question: Is the *Koinonia* lacking among us? To what extent does our church represent the *Communio Sanctorum*?

## I

While there is general agreement that the distress of the Church comes to focus in its disunity, there is a wide variance of counsel and judgment as to the proper manner and method of overcoming it. It is a real cause for gratitude to God that the problem is being approached in our day much more biblically and soundly than in previous generations. There is a growing perception that unity must be interpreted in terms of the true nature of the Church.

The New Testament is one in its declaration that the ground and substance of unity is Jesus Christ. It is not an ideal which can be created or effected by man. It is never unity for the mere sake of unity. In essence, it cannot even be seen or understood by men. Only its effects or manifestations indicate its presence and reality. It is empirical only for faith. The world sees only the dividedness of the Church. The Christian sees the unity, but it is perceptible only in faith. When a believer is united to Christ by faith and receives the Holy Spirit, he is incorporated at once into the Holy People of God. The unique New Testament designation for this corporate reality is the Fellow-

ship (*Koinonia*). When writing to the Corinthians, Paul addresses them as "called by God into the Fellowship of Christ," and he means not the companionship of Christ, but the Fellowship belonging to and named after Him. The same thought of corporate oneness is present in Paul's famous metaphor of the "Body of Christ" (Eph. 1:22f; 4:15f; Col. 1:18), and in his familiar expression "in Christ." No one can be in Christ and not at the same time be one with the New People of God, the Body of which Christ is the Head. "Whatever of wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification, or redemption, the Church can enjoy or communicate, she possesses not only by but in Christ: for he is made of God to her, not only the method by which these wonderful gifts are bestowed, but in the highest possible sense, the very things themselves."<sup>1</sup> In the Ephesian letter, Paul speaks of unity nine times in one paragraph, and in five applications (4:3-6), but not one word is said about institutional unity or external uniformity. The true unity of the Church, then, is the oneness which is grounded in Christ and effected by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is an ontological, spiritual unity, existent and real. This is and must remain the essential criterion by which we interpret the unity of the Church.

In the subsequent development of the Church, a story familiar to all students of church history, changes occurred which vitally affected this spiritual conception of the Church's unity. While subsequent historical circumstances made inevitable and necessary a new emphasis upon uniformity of ministerial orders, doctrine, and the possession of a complex, rigid, institutional form, it must be perceived that these changes affected the New Testament criterion of unity. Unity came to be defined less and less in terms of the Fellowship of the Spirit, the oneness of believers in Christ, and more and more in terms of dogma and institutional form. A wrong criterion of unity gained acceptance in the post-apostolic centuries, and we have been paying for it ever since. If there is any inadequacy in Calvin's theology of the Church it is at this very point. In his fearful struggle against the formidable institution of Romanism, he brilliantly distinguished between the invisible and the visible Church, but due to the exigencies of his historical situation, he placed the major emphasis upon the visible Church and its visible markings. Whether by intention or not, he initiated in his theology and actual practice at Geneva an emphasis upon the structure and form of the Church

which has grown to the proportions of an ecclesiasticism in the Reformed churches, that is not any less rigid than that of the famous institutional churches. It must be perceived clearly that the unity of the Church must be defined by what the Church *is*, and not what it *has* by way of outward form either in dogma or organization. Visibly the Church must express itself in and through the various features of human institution; but the unity of the Church cannot be found on this level. The unity of the Church must be found in the realm of the *spirit* and must be defined in terms of *spirit*, and not in terms of organization, symbols, or ministerial orders.

## II

The unity of the Church as an existent, spiritual unity should not keep us from seeing clearly that it can and must evidence itself visibly. Although the spiritual unity of the Church can never be adequately defined by its visible features, this does not preclude its visibility. It should be a conscious realization of the Church, and the aim of the expressional life of the Church. For this reason, Paul could properly exhort believers in the Ephesian church to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). The unity of the Church on earth is always admittedly imperfect, but must always be in the process of actualization and realization. Since the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the effective bond which unites believers to one another, and all to Christ, it follows that all the outward expressions of unity must proceed from the presence and power of the Spirit. The New Testament is specific in describing the essential manifestations of this unity which proceed from the Spirit. It is a unity of faith. The Church of Jesus Christ is always a confessing Church. This faith is distinctly personal and has for its object the divine Redeemer, crucified for us, Who is unto us the wisdom of God and the power of God. This faith the Church must manifest in allegiance and obedience. Since imperfection marks everything human in this life, the unity of faith among believers is also imperfect. For this reason, the Church must always ask concerning itself: Is Jesus Christ present? Where Christ is, there is the Church; and wherever the Church is, there is Christ.

True faith, however, always works by love. The best test of a pure faith is whether or not it makes its possessors pure. And therefore the New Testament describes the unity of the Church as visibly expressed in *agape*, love. It is the conspic-



uous note of the New Testament Church. This love extends to all believers without distinction of race, nation, class or sex. It comes to expression at all the levels of existence, social, economic, political. If then, why not now? The love which binds the Christian Fellowship together must be love without distinction as to nation, race or ecclesiastical boundaries. It should lead not only to acts of kindness and helpfulness, but to genuine Christian fellowship.

There are many forces operative in the churches of our time which constitute grave barriers to the larger actualization of unity. They are too numerous and varied to justify discussion at this point. It might be well, however, for all of us to give some thought to two forces or emphases that seriously impede unity within the ranks of our conservative, evangelical churches. The first is an exaggerated *individualism* both in the life and message of many of our conservative churches. The crucial message of redemption is frequently proclaimed and received without due regard for its corporate, social nature. Salvation, to be sure, is an intensely personal matter. The basic requirements of the Gospel, consciousness of sin and the human response of faith to the overtures of divine grace, are inescapably personal. But the Gospel of Redemption reaches us through the proclamation of the Church, incorporates us into that Church, and binds us together in an indissoluble bond of oneness. Our sinful I-isolation ceases the moment we make the decision of faith, because the act of faith makes us a member of that Fellowship which knows no boundaries of time or place. To be a Christian is to belong to the *Communio Sanctorum* which expresses itself in the visible Church, outside of which there is normally no salvation. It is impossible to be united to Christ without being united to one another in love. Every proclamation of the Gospel which unintentionally ignores this corporate aspect of salvation is a distortion, and every such proclamation, which intentionally ignores it, is to that extent a false preaching of a false gospel. Professor John Whale spoke straight from the New Testament as well as straight from the shoulder when he said, "Churchmanship is never an 'extra' to personal faith, an 'optional subject' so to speak, for those who happen to be gregariously inclined."<sup>2</sup> It is to be feared that one of the more regrettable impacts of Fundamentalism upon certain sections of our Reformed Church is exactly the omission of this corporate note in the Gospel proclamation. It is

a most serious omission. The result is that many of our churches instead of being *congregations* are mere *aggregations* of Christians, each regarding his Christian experience as his own, and each attending worship services for purely personal reasons. All the churches, including our own, must begin the approach to a larger actualization of unity with the local, worshiping community. It is here that the brokenness of the Church is aggravated by attitudes of selfish isolationism and egocentric self-assertion. It is the weakness of the *Koinonia* in the worshiping community that is reflected in the denominational divisions of the Church.

The second emphasis which hinders the realization of unity in our time is an exaggerated *institutionalism*. I use the term here in the broad sense of what the Church has by way of expressional and organizational form and structure. Now, not for one moment can it be assumed that the visible Church can dispense with creeds, doctrinal standards, and forms of government. While not of the essence of the Church, they are important to its well-being. Every denomination has the right to frame for purposes of distinctive witness, certain rules of faith and action, and the further right of requiring their acceptance and performance by members and ministers. But it should be obvious to all, that the unity of the Church cannot be sought in any of these things. The true unity of the Church is the unity of faith in Jesus Christ manifesting itself in the Spirit of love. There can be no progress in the actualizing of the inherent unity of the Church as long as the churches insist upon defining that unity in terms of the Church as institution. While the Roman and Anglican communions have been conspicuous offenders at this point, they are not the only offenders. Among the Reformed churches, their respective theologies (which are aspects of the Church as institution) have tended to separate them as rigidly from one another as anything that Rome or Westminster ever produced by way of papacy or apostolic succession. The churches which stand in the Reformed tradition have failed to realize their inherent unity because they have looked for the criteria of unity in that which characterizes the Church as institution and not as a fellowship of faith. Since the Reformed churches hold firmly the principles of the regulative appeal to the Holy Scriptures and the right of private judgment with respect to the Scriptures, they are duty bound to hold to the truth as they

see it and to express it institutionally (doctrinally). But these very principles make doctrinal divergence inevitable, and all hope of securing the unity of the churches by way of doctrinal agreement impossible. If our contemporary Calvinism wishes to face its own dilemma realistically, it must see that the unity of the Church must be sought along lines that are more spiritual and less ecclesiastical. The degree to which institutionalism can become a barrier to unity even within our own denomination is illustrated in a letter which came to my desk just recently. Among other things, this letter contained a list of "temporary suggested aims" for pledging and signing by laymen and ministers of our church, with a view to bringing "new spiritual life and growth to our church." The final aim suggested in a series of four reads as follows:

We will promote and support only such inter-denominational fellowship and cooperation as is evangelical and in harmony with our standards of Faith.

We hold that any council or conference of Christians or churches, to be in harmony with our Standards of Faith, must publicly affirm the authority of the Bible as the infallible Word of God and the only rule of faith and practice.

While extended comment could be made regarding the reasons for the statement as well as its many interesting and serious implications, the principal reason for alluding to it here is that it represents a strange exaltation of the church as institution. In its plainest meaning, the statement declares that the signers will promote and support only such fellowship and organizations among the denominations as are in harmony with our denominational standards of faith. Since our standards are accepted only by Reformed churchmen, this means that the signers determine to limit all cooperative effort to the Reformed Church. No doubt the above statement was made with the best intentions and with the highest motives, but it is a seriously mistaken proposal. It misinterprets the purpose of our denominational standards and misconceives the whole purpose of creeds and symbols. Creeds and standards are limiting concepts, demarking clearly the lines between the church and the world, and putting well defined boundaries about the churches in order to express their distinctive witness. While the various theological symbols of the churches serve to distinguish their peculiar witness, they were never intended to separate Christians from their fellow-Christians. The above statement uses *our* denominational standards as the *sine qua non* of unity,

which is a thoroughly un-Reformed view and employment of them. To regard any kind of structural form as definitive or expressive of unity is ecclesiasticism, pure and simple. The Church creates forms, but forms, even the best forms, do not create the Church. The Church is created by spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, and the secret of the Church's unity must be found in the communion of the Holy Spirit, binding human souls in faith to Christ, and thereby to one another in bonds of enduring fellowship.

### III

With these considerations to be faced, it becomes important to determine just what the churches can do to express their spiritual oneness, despite their outward brokenness. Are there any immediate, practical steps that can be taken toward unity among the churches? At least three steps can be taken in view of what has been previously said. (1) The seeking of institutional unity is not as important as expressing our existent, spiritual unity in cooperative efforts. It is at this point that the ecumenical movement of our time is vastly more important and truer to the spirit of the New Testament than the church-union movement of some years ago. The ecumenical movement came up out of the deep plight of our broken Christendom. It did not originate from a desire for power or from the mere wish to organize, or even from a desire to combat the Roman Catholic Church. It sprang from the recognition of the existent, spiritual oneness of the Body of Christ. Its attitude is one of submission to God and His Word, of obedience to Christ and His will. Despite the recalcitrant spirit of a few American liberals, it is seeking to frame a vigorous biblical witness to the Christian Faith under the dynamic of the Spirit of God. Its purpose is not to construct a world church, but to express the unity of the Church in various cooperative efforts. One thing the churches can do, including our own church, is to engage actively in the direction and support of this movement. (2) Although institutional unity is positively secondary to spiritual unity, whenever possible and feasible, denominational churches should unite. Where denominational backgrounds, theology and polity are harmonious, union is clearly possible. The great theologian, Charles Hodge, spoke a serious word when he said, "It is their duty (the denominational churches) to combine or unite in one body, so far as geographical and political considerations will permit, wherever and whenever the grounds

of their separation are inadequate and unscriptural."<sup>3</sup> Surely such a union faces us in the proposed merger of our Reformed and United Presbyterian churches. The contemplation of this union is proceeding cautiously, slowly, and in whole-hearted devotion to the Word of God. Ample time is being devoted to the study of doctrinal standards, liturgical formulas, etc. The common Calvinistic heritage of these two churches and their oneness in distinctive witness, should prompt us all to prayerful continuance of union efforts. (3) As over against those churches with which we must be content to remain apart, certain duties devolve upon us. These duties devolve upon all the churches. One of the finest statements of these respective duties ever made was that written many years ago by the previously mentioned, Professor Charles Hodge. I can do no better than quote some of them in brief:

The first and most comprehensive of these duties is mutual recognition. By this is meant the acknowledgment of their members as Christian brethren, and of the denominations or bodies themselves as Christian Churches. It is a great offence against Christian charity, and a direct violation of the command of Christ, to refuse to receive as our brethren those whom Christ receives as his disciples. . . . It is included in the acknowledgment that a body of Christians is a Church of Christ, that we should commune with its members in public worship and in the sacraments, and allow them to commune with us. . . .

A third duty resting on different churches or denominations is to recognize the validity of each other's acts of discipline. . . . The same remarks apply to cases of ordination. . . .

Another important duty which rests upon denominations recognizing each other as Christian Churches, is that of non-interference. . . .

Finally, it is obviously the duty of different denominations to cultivate peace. They should avoid all the causes of alienation and ill-feeling, and do everything in their power to promote Christian love and fellowship. It is their duty, indeed, to maintain what they believe to be the truth, and endeavor to promote unity of faith; but they are bound to abstain from mere rivalry and sectarian conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

These duties have lost none of their force for our day. In fact, they outline a practical procedure which is being followed today by the majority of the denominations, including our own. Whatever may be the future of Christian unity, one perception is growing in clarity and intensity: a more biblical conception of unity will aid greatly in the determination of both its nature and expression.

1. Breckinridge, Robert J., *The Knowledge of God Subjectively Considered*, New York: 1860, p. 495.
2. Whale, John S., *Christian Doctrine*, New York: 1941, p. 129.
3. Hodge, Charles, *The Church and Its Polity*, London: 1879, pp. 95f.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 97ff.

#### WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

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Vernon H. Kooy, '42, is pastor of the Far Rockaway Church of Inwood, Long Island; New York. He is also a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Henry P. De Pree is a missionary on furlough from our Chinese Mission.

## Church Life and Theology in the Netherlands

W. L. IETSWAART

**I**N his famous novel *Time Must Have a Stop* Aldous Huxley writes as his motto, "Thought's the slave of life and life's time's fool." There is this much truth in the statement, that thinking is interwoven with and prompted by the circumstances of life, that it is not an abstract pursuit apart from life. This is one of the reasons why it is so extremely hard for an American to have an idea of Europe today. To mention only one fact, the two world wars that were largely wars on European territory have turned Europe upside down, while they had a comparatively slight and distant influence on American social life and thinking. It

is hard for an American to imagine and understand what these wars and their results have changed in the European mind. Europe has been appointed by God to go through incomparable suffering. In a way this was a privilege. Some of the essential things of life humanity seems only to be able to learn by suffering. By suffering Europe has come closer to several essential truths and by suffering it got rid of some basic errors.

The change of mind manifests itself, for example, in the relation between liberalism and orthodoxy. For an adequate conception of the situation it may be well to distinguish three

groups: the liberals, the Barthians, and the traditional orthodox. Although the Catholics form a large and powerful group, it seems better to limit ourselves to these three groups for the sake of clarity. The first two groups are found mainly in the old historic Reformed Church, the Church people in America call the State Church, although we hope to prove later that this is no longer an adequate term. The last group is found mainly in the ultra-Reformed Church which under Kuyper broke away from the Reformed Church.

This historic Reformed Church had for the most part turned liberal in the last century. It had become a dead church with a watered-down theology. If you would ask a Reformed minister what was the fatal year of his church in the nineteenth century, he would answer without a moment's hesitation, "1816." That was the year in which the king of the Netherlands superimposed on this church a constitution which bound it completely, and weakened it by a hierarchical system of bureaucracy. The power to make decisions lay in the hands of ecclesiastical committees and not in the hands of the congregations. The leaders were indifferent to the teachings of the church and only interested in organization. In the church a spirit of indifference, rationalism and coldness prevailed. This prompted many faithful believers to leave the church. Two secessions took place, in 1834 under de Cock, and in 1886 under Kuyper. Van Raalte who founded the glorious town of Holland belonged to the secession of 1834.

The miraculous story of this old Reformed Church is that it revived and came to a gradual awakening which found its consummation in the Synod of 1946 and the constitution of 1948. The church broke the bonds of 1816 and became a free prophetic church. The war gave the final stimulus to this process. Amidst the suffering of these years the miracle happened that a church which had "no eyes, no mouth, no head, no feet, no spine" started to get "eyes to see the suffering of down-trodden classes . . . a mouth to speak her word on the most actual problems . . . hands to help . . . feet to go out into the world to bring the liberating message of God's love . . . to pagans at home." The man to whom this church owes more than to anyone else is Dr. Hendrik Kraemer, the famous missionary and international church leader. In his own unique prophetic way of speaking he never tired of reminding the church to be the church. He urged the people to a never-ceasing self-criticism and a humility under the divine judg-

ment. In the "Congregational Rebuilding" movement he appealed to the local congregations, to the laymen, to the orthodox and to the liberal; and he brought them together, not to defend their favorite theological positions, but to study the Bible. In these meetings and during these years remarkable things happened. Repeatedly liberals shifted to orthodox positions.

In general it may be said that liberalism in Europe is much farther in decline than in America. In Europe liberalism has lost its vitality and it is dying rapidly. Americans have the tendency to explain these phenomena as rising out of a pessimistic defeatist attitude. Many of them consider the European mind as being in a neurotic state. They see the European theology as being a capitulation of common sense prompted by disillusionment and frustration. "We Americans have been remarkably able throughout to maintain a 'realistic,' rationalizing mood and to assume the critical spectator attitude." So Barthianism is sometimes called "an obscure fundamentalism," or by others "a sophisticated supernaturalism." The truth, however, is that several decades ago Europe passed through the state in which most Americans still are today. It may seem strange to an American, but for an accurate observer it becomes evident that many differences between Europe and America can be explained by considering the fact that Europe is, in a way, several decades ahead of America in its development, not in its technical state but in its state of mind. This reveals itself in America's political and economic system, its social structure, its philosophical outlook, its adoration of science, its stress on detail, its still unbroken optimism and belief in progress, its self-confidence and this-worldliness, and its closed horizon.

A characteristic of many Europeans is that they carry a crisis in their souls, the crisis of our era. They are extremely conscious of the time of transition in which they live. Their view on life is radical and existential, words that have no meaning for the average American. The thinking that takes place literally among the ruins is a very special type of thinking. It has new dimensions. European theology rediscovered sin. Its eyes were opened to the demonic side of man. It simply had to abandon the childish belief in man's essential goodness. Man was unmasked in the rebellion of his ego against God. Sin and guilt became meaningful, dominating conceptions again. Sin was understood as being something



not in the social or the ethical but in the religious dimension. Dr. Greene of Yale said, "We Americans don't know what Christian misery means." Europe knows it too well. Europe has been the center of revolutionizing modern history. It has imposed its development and its problems on the rest of the globe. But in its development of revolutionizing history it has also disintegrated history. Being human it ran all the risks of failure in its tremendous adventures. That is its tragedy. Europe is guilty; nobody can deny it. But it is altogether too easy to trample on its body now that it is in agony, even as many Europeans do. It has become both the blessing and the curse of modern history. Therefore, one should have some understanding of the tragedy involved. In its grandeur and in its misery it is a picture of mankind. Would it be too bold to have the feeling that in its suffering it is, in a way, vicarious for mankind, and that the struggle which is going on there will yield its fruits? European theology has seen man as such fall completely. It has received a renewed vision of the mighty program of God amidst the mass of human history. It has gotten a glance at the supernatural; and it believes in the power of the supernatural with all its heart. It has heard "the thundering voice of God over the chaos of modern history."

Here the influence of Barth has to be mentioned. This one man has been influential in changing the face of Continental theology. His influence in Europe, and no less in The Netherlands, is overwhelming. His theology, far from being a new form of modernism, has been the main cause of the downfall of liberalism. His emphases on God's sovereignty and majesty, on the absolute qualitative difference between God and man, on God's dealing with man in Jesus Christ, on the total forgiveness as a gift of free grace, on the nature of revelation and of the Word of God have brought many back to the heart of the Gospel. The information about Barth in American textbooks is often distorted. One can read that the Barthians teach "an unknowable God," that Barth is indifferent toward attempts to change society, because the whole world lies under the crisis. It is said that in Barth's theology God is the "wholly other," a sort of abstract Being, and that God is only transcendent. Others charge that in his system God is too immanent, that God is the Reality or that his system is mysticism. Barth is accused of extreme objectivism and of extreme subjectivism,

of separating the Word of God from the Bible and of Biblicism. For people who have no conception of the dialectical method it is impossible to understand Barth; they are bound to do injustice to his thinking. That Barth is not otherworldly is evident from the fact that he has been continually advising the German church in their political and social relations. He accuses them of having separated the Gospel from public life and shows how National-Socialism got its chance by this development of Lutheranism. To a journalist asking him what was his message for Germany Barth answered, "My message for the Germans is that 2 plus 2 is 4 and not 5. The Germans must learn to act practically and simply, to fight for a little bit of order and justice and not for eternal goals and broad, general principles." Barth has translated the Biblical concepts in a language intelligible to modern man. Many scholars, who do not call themselves Barthians, have nevertheless been influenced by the framework of his thinking. In this connection it is interesting to notice the appearing of theological commentaries, which are not exclusively interested in historical-grammatical exegesis, but which give theological content for sermons. Here a theology is arising which consciously relates itself to the preaching of the church.

Returning to Hendrik Kraemer and his movement of "Congregational Rebuilding" we would say that this program has been influential in bringing together the antagonistic groups and in preparing the way for the Synod of 1946. The old General Synod consisting of permanent committees dissolved itself and was replaced by a synod chosen by the churches themselves. From now on it is incorrect to speak of the Reformed Church as the State Church. It is an independent church with a presbyterian form of government. Conscious of the fact that she is meant to be a servant of the whole nation and not only of her members, she created a group of commissions, e.g., church and school, church and youth, church and government, church and press. Kraemer says somewhere that the prophetic task of the church is "not only the ministry of the Word, but the placing of the actual lives of men in every area in the light of God's will." He continues, "God has used National-Socialism and Communism to show to the churches that as soon as they limit themselves in disobedience and blindness to the preservation of the doctrines and the winning of individual souls that then the pseudo-churches

will take over the leadership of the thoughts and consciences of men." The recent development of this church shows that it is possible to be concerned as a church with all the aspects of social life without watering down the Gospel to a social message. It approaches the complex social problems from the heart of the Gospel.

A sign of this development is the rapid growth of evangelical centers. In Utrecht, for instance, there is a Sociological Institute which makes surveys of the different social groups including a complete demographical, economic, social, cultural, psychological study of the Dutch people in order that the Gospel may be interpreted to each group in terms of its own ideology. In Driesbergen a school has been founded for lay-workers. In a three-year course it trains young men and women to be youth leaders, social workers, and teachers of religion in public schools. This re-Christianizing movement finds its expression not only in The Netherlands but all over Europe. Centers similar to Driesbergen are found in Sweden, in Scotland (the famous Iona Community), in France (Cluny), in Switzerland and in Germany.

In the beginning of our article we mentioned the three groups. The first two, the liberals and the Barthians, have been viewed. The third one is the traditional orthodoxy found in the ultra-Reformed Church. The secession of 1834 and the secession of 1886 united in 1892 under the name "De Gereformeerden Kerken in Nederland." Abraham Kuypers was the great leader of this church. This church has to be credited for its faithfulness to the creeds. This church has had an influence all out of proportion to her size. Her members founded their own university (the Free University), based on Kuypers' doctrine that Christian learning in every field is different from non-Christian learning. They formed their own Christian party, their own labor union, a Christian radio, Christian schools, and their own daily newspaper. They played an important part in the resistance movement. They have organized their youth in a strong system in which they train them in the principles of the fathers.

But there are also negative sides. They suffered from all the results of traditionalism. In theology they developed a new scholasticism, and in their view on Scripture a literalism and a slavery to "holy principles." They developed a devastating covenant doctrine mixed with speculative

theories of election. A child born in the flock of the covenant has all the promises of God's love and favor and he can claim his rights. A child born in the world cannot claim anything. He has none of these rights. Discussions arose regarding distinctions within the covenant, e.g., between the elect (the real covenant) and the non-elect (the outward covenant). The tragic result of such theories was the Schilder schism in which neither synod nor Schilder can be justified and in which rivalry, suspicion and slander played a large part. The irony of the whole story was that the subject of debate was "regeneration." Let us suppose a child is baptized who later turns out not to belong to the elect. "That was no real baptism," says the one. "It surely was real," replies the other. So one says, "Let us assume that the child is regenerated (as if that were the normal rule!) until the moment that it turns out not to be regenerate." "No," contends the other, "God's promises are sure." Without tiring our brains about quibbling distinctions we can conclude that the cause of all the trouble is the covenant theory and the attempt to find in the state of the child, in its capacity for faith and in its regeneration, a justification for its baptism. On the basis of such a covenant doctrine the world is usually regarded as only hostile, and threatening for covenant children. The believers have to be protected by the walls of the covenant. Therefore, isolationism. To be fair, however, we have to mention that among the younger groups a much more evangelical spirit is growing.

A conflict between the Reformed and the ultra-Reformed is growing in matters of politics and the Christian school. Many Reformed people have become members of the new Socialistic party, a party that has done away with the Marxian principles of class struggle and proletarian revolution. They consider the social program of this party workable in politics. They are severely attacked by the ultra-Reformed with their Christian political party. One of the subjects of debate is "antithesis." According to the ultra-Reformed an antithesis goes all through the world by virtue of election, an antithesis between the regenerate and the non-regenerate, a doctrine bequeathed by Kuypers. On account of this fact all Christians have to unite in a Christian Party, because regenerate and unregenerate have never a common basis in any area of life. The Socialistic Christians are as wholehearted and sincere believers as the others. The only difference is

that in politics they believe that they can and do have a common goal with non-Christians.

Typical of the Dutch spirit is the fact that the distinctions cut so deeply. The conflicts are so sharp and drastic that they penetrate all of life. The Dutchman lives out of deep convictions and these convictions condition all the aspects of his life. An American would be amazed if he would see the number of books and articles appearing and the number of conferences held in a month in this small country not larger than Lake Michigan. There are two elements in the struggle. On the one hand, among some groups there is a repugnant provincialism. But also, in general, there is a vitality and vigor, a deep concern and a sincere persistent struggling with the problems that should make many an American jealous. Too often in America the vital problems are dodged, and a spirit of friendly, tolerant indifference takes the place of real, vital concern.

Of the issues recently in debate in the Netherlands we can mention only a few. Many articles are appearing on the problem of the church and

society, the church and the masses, the church and communism, and the Indonesian problem. Reinhold Niebuhr and his teachings are in the center of attention. The European feels a close relationship to him. Of far reaching significance is the debate on infant baptism. As is probably known, Karl Barth has openly rejected infant baptism. The impact of this event on the European church is tremendous. It has brought forth a great deal of discussion. In several countries ministers refuse to baptize children, although Barth himself does not approve of any rapid change in procedure. Another point to which increasing attention is paid is the doctrine of the atonement.

This article has given only a slight and insufficient impression of the status in our country. Still, we dare to maintain that the development in our country and in Europe has significance for America. It may be that, although a continent collapsed, the thinking in its last decades has had a significance reaching far beyond its borders both in space and time.

## Our Church and Other Churches

LESTER J. KUYPER

THE Reformed Church is vitally concerned about her relationships with other parts of Christendom. General Synod last June received no less than twenty-one overtures regarding our membership in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. These overtures reflected various and, in some instances, conflicting points of view. The Synod did not settle the issue but wisely asked a committee of competent men to study the problem of our relationships with other churches.

Although one could wish that the ideal of a united Church witnessing for Christ in a sin-cursed and divided world were a reality, yet a sober retrospect in history shows how unattainable is the ideal. Yet strangely enough, the Holy Spirit has also drawn believers into a unity, or perhaps, into various unities of the faith.

How do Christian groups react toward those who differ in points of faith and worship? In two ways. Some demand a complete and thoroughgoing separation from all who do not see eye-to-eye on *all* points of faith and worship. In the great Lutheran Church of our country we have the illustrious example of the Missouri Synod

which rigidly holds itself aloof not merely from the various parts of Protestantism, but even from other Lutheran Synods stemming out of the Lutheran Reformation. The Reformed Churches of Dutch stock in some instances manifest a similar spirit. Baptist Churches possibly outdo any group in varieties of names and divisions. All these may be classed as isolationists.

Other groups of Christians have been eager to cooperate, whenever possible, in making the witness of Christ more effective in all areas of life. These have held theological differences with charity yet without apology or compromise. These have recognized that the Reformation principle of the right of private interpretation of Scripture must be honored. Although sincere in conviction and forthright in their witness to the truth of God, yet in humility these do not claim to be the sole possessors of Christian truth for it is altogether too evident that the Holy Spirit has also presented Christ to believers in other churches. Since, therefore, Christ is also amongst others, there can be Christian cooperation and fellowship beyond the confines of denominations.

Let us state the proposition clearly. To have

interdenominational cooperation and witness we must allow differences in points of faith and worship. Cooperation requires a willingness to *tolerate* a different point of view; it does not require *acceptance* of that point of view. The isolationist neither tolerates nor accepts any departure from his faith; the cooperationist tolerates such departure yet insists on the validity of his faith.

## I

In this issue between isolationism and cooperation we may well ask where the Reformed Church should take its stand. For our guidance let us review our practice in various areas of Reformed Church life.

What has been the record of the Reformed Church in her missionary work? Let us start in Japan. Our brethren soon discovered other Christian workers with whom they united to present the Gospel, so that our mission is a part of the Church of Christ in Japan. In China together with other Christians we are building the Kingdom of God under the name of the Church of South Fukien. The witness for united work in India has had a remarkable history which reached its consummation in the United Church of South India, recently established. Our witness for Christ among the followers of Mohammed is carried on cooperatively in our United Mission in Mesopotamia. Our recent and thrilling venture is the sending forth of two young missionary families who will bring the light of the Gospel to the sin-darkened lives of the Anuak tribe in the South Sudan. This also is done as a cooperative mission with the Rev. Don McClure of the United Presbyterian Church.

Our work in foreign lands presents a striking phenomenon. In every area of our missionary endeavor, with the exception of work in Arabia where other churches are not active, we have united with one or more churches to present Christ to the peoples of the world. Within us is the urge to cooperate.

Our genius for cooperation is no less conspicuous in our mission enterprises at home. Our neighbor to the south presented a Macedonian call. Our church responded by sending two missionary families. These with their native workers in Chiapas are closely affiliated with the Mexican Presbyterian Church. In recognition of our work there Dr. Jacob Prins was commissioned by our General Synod to be present at the seventy-fifth anniversary of this Church in Mexico. As our

work grows in Chiapas, we hope to become a presbytery of the Mexican Church. Other cooperative missions are carried on among Japanese Christians in our country, among the vast number of migrant workers and through other projects sponsored by the Home Missions Council.

As we reflect on cooperative work, we think of the American Bible Society in its translating and distributing of the Scriptures. The work of the Lord's Day Alliance is to preserve our Day of worship from the encroachments of the world. The American Tract Society and the Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian System are other cooperative agencies. All these and others serve in making the Christian message effective in various areas of life, and therefore General Synod has heartily endorsed them and commended them to the prayers and generosity of the Church.

In a more or less official capacity we unite in promoting Christian work and worship in city, county or state enterprises such as Sunday School Associations, Christian Endeavor Unions, Youth for Christ meetings and community projects. The Reformed Church shows a willingness and ability for cooperative endeavor in the work of the Kingdom.

## II

Let us direct our attention to another area of our life as a Reformed Church, the realm of educational institutions. Faculties in these institutions are required to have training beyond that which our schools can offer. Where have these teachers engaged in post-graduate study? Largely in schools which are not of our persuasion in all points of faith and worship. Our college faculties, laymen and ministers, have attended or have been graduated from various graduate schools. All ministers now serving as professors of our seminaries have done graduate work in schools differing with us more or less on matters of faith and practice. Several ministers in our churches have and even now are engaged in graduate studies in seminaries and universities. The Reformed Church has been grateful for such training and has gladly accepted these men in class room and in pulpit.

In this connection we may note that our colleges are members of various collegiate associations. In the Association of Church Related Schools our representatives have taken a prominent place. The seminaries are members of the American Association of Theological Schools,



comprising more than one hundred schools. Students of our seminaries are affiliated with the Interseminary Movement and actively participate in its conferences. Obviously in these associations there cannot be agreement on all matters of faith and life, yet we believe that these associations promote the welfare of our schools.

Every minister and student of the Scriptures is greatly indebted to scholars in various branches of Protestantism for the work done on the Bible. During the past hundred years many ancient manuscripts have been discovered and have been edited by experts from various schools and denominations. Recent discoveries and studies cast interesting light on the Sacred Page. Grammars, lexicons and commentaries become our heritage from the mind and research of a vast assortment of theological backgrounds. All this we gladly receive from others with whom we may differ on some points of faith.

The Reformed Church owes much to the fathers of the faith even though some of their teachings we cannot accept. Athanasius is associated in our creeds with orthodox Christology, yet in one utterance, at least, he was a universalist. Augustine set the pattern for Reformation theology, yet he declared the Septuagint inspired and the Apocrypha canonical. Luther broke the shackles of Rome, yet he had very little regard for some portions of the Scripture. Wilhelm Gesenius became the father of all lexicographical work in the Old Testament during the past hundred years, yet he was a rationalist and was constantly under suspicion. Joseph Henry Thayer, whose New Testament lexicon is most commonly used today, embraced views not in harmony with conservative theology. Enough! With each of these and many more every minister has fellowship in thought and spirit, even though there may be differences in some points of faith.

Dr. John Timothy Stone relates the following interesting story about Dwight L. Moody whom he knew well. Professor S. R. Driver, a renowned Old Testament scholar of Oxford, was scheduled to appear in the conference program at East Northfield, Massachusetts. Someone took Mr. Moody to task for inviting Professor Driver who accepted various sources for the Pentateuch and other positions of liberal critics. Mr. Moody was well aware of the speaker's views but insisted that the English Professor had so much to offer pertaining to the Bible that the conference could ill afford to miss him.

Let us summarize. The Reformed Church in its work abroad and at home has manifested a spirit of hearty cooperation with Evangelical Churches. We have fellowship with others in academic circles and in biblical studies. This kind of fellowship has been possible through our willingness to tolerate the views of others while we in turn freely express our convictions without hesitation or compromise.

### III

The problem before our church is whether we can any longer fellowship with other churches who are members of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America because of the differences in points of faith. No objection, I believe, is raised against the great good done by the Council during the past years. We heartily commend the work in areas of social welfare, world relief and human relationships, for we want the Gospel to be applied to all areas of our present-day complex life. The criticism is not in what the Council has done, but in what some members of the Council have said.

Let there be no mistake. Some utterances are from liberals who do not accept conservative positions of thought. Utterances that deny tenets of our faith we lament and we solemnly protest against them. Yet let it also be remembered that some of these same liberals have uttered great truths, taken from the Scripture, which we heartily accept. It is unfair, if not un-Christian, to condemn all that a speaker, liberal or conservative, says because he has some bad spots in his address. Rather let us use our God-given discernment and not withdraw with isolationists from the united witness and work of the church.

John Calvin confronted a similar problem in the church of his time. He took sharp issue with liberal and immoral men, yet he also severely denounced the Anabaptists who withdrew from the church because of its faults and sins. He declared that the temptation to withdraw arises from an inconsiderate zeal for righteousness which roots itself in pride and opinion of superior sanctity rather than in true holiness (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, i, 16). Calvin had deep concern for the unity of the body of Christ.

Let us remind ourselves that all members of the Council are not liberal. Several staunch evangelical Christians give expression to their faith. Last fall we had the privilege of hearing Professor Elmer G. Homrighausen of Princeton Seminary deliver soul-stirring lectures on Evan-

gelism. Professor Homrighausen is a member of the Council's Commission on Evangelism. During the past synodical year three of our Reformed Church preachers were given time on the Council's radio program. We must be fair. Liberals there are with whom we take issue at *some* points; on other matters we find agreement. Conservatives also have spoken for the Council and their messages have been well received.

## Book Reviews

*The Bible To-day*, by C. H. Dodd. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947. Pp. ix—168. \$2.50.

Many of Professor Dodd's books have been in the realm of biblical interpretations of history—his theme is "realized eschatology"—and this one is no exception. It is a summary and crystallization of what he has previously written made applicable to the problem of our contemporary historical situation. It first appeared as a series of "open lectures" under the auspices of the Divinity Faculty of the University of Cambridge. The arrangement and style of these lectures has been preserved and they are presented without introduction.

Adopting the approach of historical source criticism the writer defines the Bible as a group of diverse writings, dealing with a community conscious of a continuing existence, collected by the Church and presented as the revelation of God in history (pp. 5ff). This collection bears the stamp of the great literary prophets of Israel upon it (p. 34). Out of their experience of God in history they discovered a pattern which portrayed the divine meaning (p. 86). They thus interpreted the events of their contemporary history as a divine encounter with the nation, in which God's "Word" confronts man as both judgment and mercy (pp. 105f). Though failing to gain wide acceptance of their interpretation they influenced a group of followers who kept the interpretation alive and later rewrote and interpreted the whole history of the community from this viewpoint. This encounter of God with man, confronting him especially at moments of great tension, is termed the "Word of God" which demands a response of obedience so that the purposes of God may be fulfilled in history. According to the response history is made. Israel's history is the record of her response to this "Word." Her experience is universalized as the experience of humanity, and of each individual as a segment of humanity, by recasting the history in a framework of prehistoric symbolic myth (p. 118). This history culminated in and was completed with the coming of Jesus Christ who gave the "Word" its final utterance and also made the final response of obedience to it (pp. 110f). "It is in Christ, in what He did and suffered on our behalf, that the renewal of God's people is accomplished" (p. 72). By responding in repentance and trust to this final call through Christ the individual puts meaning into history. The teaching of Jesus becomes a new law by which future generations are to recognize the judgment of God upon their own way of life. By reaffirming the judgment of the crucifixion and taking the word of forgiveness provided by the resurrection they set a renewing energy operating in the stream of history to direct its course. History is

Today the liberalism of the past generation is waning. Revival of conservatism is in evidence. Certainly this is not the time for conservative churches to withdraw from opportunities for presenting the claims of Christ in a world broken and bankrupt. The Gospel of the crucified Christ we must preach wherever and whenever we may. Let America hear our message; and let the unre-generate world know our concern to make Christ and His teaching real in our faith and practice.

made by this encounter of God with man, therefore, in the Church. To find meaning in our present historical situation and "transfigure" it one must relive himself into the history. This is best done through the Church.

Those who deny the validity of historical criticism will find much in the book to criticize—e.g. its comparative study of Scripture, its treatment of many passages as mythological, legendary or symbolic, its chronology. In fact, much of the force of its argument is removed if this approach be disallowed. However, the author offers much that is commendable: his emphasis on the unity of Scripture (the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, and the New is not to be understood apart from the Old, pp. 10f); his insistence on understanding Scripture in its historical framework; his illustration of the fact that the ultimate meaning of the Bible, though derived from, is independent of the historical accuracy of the record which is the vehicle of its transmission; his grasping of the "Word" in its wider aspect as event, (strangely enough he does not use this aspect when he refers to Christ, as John Knox does in his *Christ The Lord*); his awareness of the importance of the prophets; his stress on the Divine initiative (pp. 120f); his conviction of the centrality of Jesus Christ; his treatment of the sayings of Jesus. The last is refreshing coming from a disciple of Crisis Theology when it is compared with the view of Bultmann, expressed in *Jesus and the Word*, which virtually denies any authenticity to the sayings of Jesus.

This reviewer feels Dodd overemphasizes the importance of the prophets in determining the character of Scripture. He almost makes them responsible for the revelation. He writes, "It is through the key provided by prophetic teaching that they yield meaning for religion" (p. 34). However, from his own definition of history (p. 99), the mere fact that we have remembered events and recorded history prior to the prophets demands that these must have had meaning for the community. The revelation of God at the moment of the Exodus was sufficient to be constantly referred to in reminding Israel of her obligation to God. Its meaning was not due to any re-interpretation by the prophets.

Dodd fails to give full weight to the matter of the atonement. He says the value of Christ's death was in his obedience (p. 111). It was the judgment of God upon the world, but in no sense is it viewed as a sacrifice for sin. Christ felt the judgment and made humanity's response. Thus by becoming "in Christ" we perform the act of obedience and receive new life. This does not do justice to the power of sin in our life. The tragic thing about Israel was that she did not respond to God's call by the prophet. Dodd feels that God's love

exemplified in Christ is irresistible, but history refutes his position. Men are not drawn to Christ by their own power. Men cannot make the response, except God enable them. In this regard Dodd does not do justice to the New Testament concept of faith in Christ. Faith is not only an initial response, but a continuous response to the summons of God.

The author struggles with the problem of history, which Reinhold Niebuhr terms basically the problem of the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man, but offers no convincing solution to the problem. He affirms God's sovereignty over history, but denies a fixed course in history (pp. 130f), and so ultimately denies that history works out God's sovereign purpose or has a purpose. Thus history becomes meaningless. Such it is for him outside of the recognition of God's "Word" acting in history. This is contrary to experience. We experience some sort of pattern or design in individual life. If the pattern of history is the same as that of the individual we ought to experience a pattern in history, i.e. history must have a purpose. Furthermore, he would limit the activity of God in history to the response of man to his "Word," maintaining man's moral freedom. But it is precisely God's overruling of man's freedom that constitutes His judgment and mercy. It is Israel in Exile who is restored, the last sinner standing under the judgment of God, who is redeemed. Dodd recognizes this (p. 53) but practically makes the judgment and mercy of God an either-or proposition. He further overlooks the activity of the Holy Spirit in directing the course of history.

Dodd tends to interpret the final consummation of things in terms of universalism. "The logic of the biblical revelation seems to demand an equal universality for the final 'restoration of all things.' . . . As every human being lies under God's judgment, so every human being is ultimately destined, in His mercy, to eternal life" (p. 118). Though there seems to be an aspect of universalism in Scripture, yet the facts and the teaching of Jesus militate against it. The prophets view the restoration of Israel as that of a remnant to whom God's promise will be fulfilled (cp. Is. 11:11, Jer. 23:3, Ez. 6:8). Similarly Paul in Romans (where he, according to Dodd, affirms a universalistic view, Rom. 11:26, 32) quotes Isaiah's prediction that a remnant shall be saved (9:27) and makes plain that not all Israel is the true Israel (9:6). Jesus also in His parables (e.g., The Rich Man and Lazarus, Lk. 16:14-21; The Pounds, Lk. 19:11-28) — and in his apocalyptic discourse of Matthew 25 sets forth the absolutism of final punishment as well as final blessing.

In two places the writer tends to let his Anglicanism creep in, in the disparagement of the Reformers' principle of the authority of Scripture (pp. 20-23) and in the view of the sacraments as a re-enactment of Christ's death (pp. 160-162).

I heartily recommend the volume for a careful study. It must not be read rapidly but with keen discernment. Professor Dodd is a good scholar and aware of the problems involved in any application of the revelation of God to the historical situation. The book contains a wealth of information and confronts one with the living issues of one's faith.

—VERNON H. KOOY.

*The Spirit of Chinese Culture*, by Francis C. M. Wei. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947. Pp. xii—186. \$2.75.

This is a book which makes a significant contribution towards helping Americans to understand China—so necessary

today because of our increased responsibility for our trans-Pacific neighbors. As Professor Latourette says in his foreword, "If we are to know the Chinese we must become aware of the systems of thought and religions which have had so large a share in making them what they are." For our missionary task also, renewed attention to Chinese culture is essential. The stronger nationalistic feeling, which the war has brought, makes it more urgent that the gospel be presented in such a language and in such a spirit as shall obviate the impression of its being a foreign religion, and shall let it come home to the heart naturally as God's cure for universal needs. As the author says, "If the church is to be the church of China it must capture the mind and imagination of the people." Dr. Wei not only is interested in the subject from an intellectual point of view, but wishes to make more effective the proclamation of the gospel.

The author's study of the Chinese classics and intimate knowledge of developments in philosophy in 4000 years of Chinese history have given him a deep appreciation of old Chinese culture. But it is not a mere antiquarian interest, because as President of a mission institution, Hwa-chung University of Wuchang, he has dealt with present day forward-looking young people in their life problems. He has not lived in long detachment from Chinese life by residence outside of China, as some Chinese writing about their own country and civilization have done, e.g. Lin Yutang. He has shared the hardness of the people's life and is anxious to see the cultural heritage of the past utilized wherever possible in these critical days to win China to a new and higher life through Christianity. One can hardly hope to find a better way to study the spirit of Chinese culture than by seeing it through such eyes. Although the large number of Chinese words, for which no proper English equivalent can be found, may make parts of it a bit tedious to the ordinary American reader, the general concepts are clear and the historical allusions amply illustrate the argument, so that one can readily follow the author in his reasoning down to the excellent final chapter on interpreting Christianity in terms of Chinese culture.

In his definition of culture he insists that it is different from civilization. Civilization is preserved in literature and is capable of being appraised by a study of excavations, even in the case of extinct nations. Culture is something less objective and more elusive. It is the spirit of civilization expressed in personalities, and it is especially in moral traditions and religions that the spirit of this culture can be found.

China has a culture developed throughout the ages of her history. The shallow Christian who objects to missions is wont to say, "If the Chinese have their culture is it not impertinence to proselytize so highly cultured a people?" Beside this over-appreciation of native cultures the author places the Barthian view that there is no element of divine revelation in any of the heathen religions, and so no bridge that can be made use of to bring men from them to God in Christ. These two views are set aside by the assertion that God not only has revealed *the Way, the Life and the Truth* in Jesus Christ, but also whatever truth is found in these various religions is the result of the work of the Spirit of God. So the question of method is important, viz. how we can use the truth God has given, which lies embedded in the beliefs so deeply rooted in the country, to bring men to the full light in Christ.

The importance of recognizing the culture of the country is strikingly illustrated by the failure of the first three attempts at the conversion of China. Nestorian missionaries in the 7th century, though meeting with such success that an emperor

received them and later imperial decrees ordered dissemination of Christianity, nevertheless after two and a half centuries left only a stone tablet at Sian. How different were the results of two and a half centuries of preaching in the Roman empire! The second attempt, in the 13th century, when Nestorian missionaries came with the Mongols and some Roman Catholic missionaries entered, again failed; and after two centuries there was no trace of Christians. One great reason for their failure was that they compromised with Buddhism, also a "foreign religion," and neglected the use of the Chinese culture as a medium for interpreting Christianity to the Chinese. In the third attempt, when during the 16th to the 18th centuries Roman Catholic missionaries came and even had imperial patronage, they were still blind to the importance of recognizing the culture of the country. The different orders quarreled over the term to be used for "God," and after seeking opinion from the Chinese court, the pope overruled their advice. For the pope rejected the term "Shangti," meaning "Supreme Ruler," which occurs in the classics, and decided for the term Tienchu "Lord of heaven," which the Roman Catholics use to this day. The latter term was a Buddhist term for very inferior gods. So this third effort also did not have a very satisfying result. The obvious lesson from this history for our Protestant Missions, which have only a little over a hundred years of history, is to try to make our work more far-reaching by utilizing the spirit of Chinese culture rather than to fly in the face of it.

In four chapters richly filled with illustration, Dr. Wei examines Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in their cultural effects on China. Space limits forbid any detailed consideration of this material, which is very enlightening to one who seeks to know what most influences Chinese thought and action. He concludes that "China is thoroughly Confucian because Confucianism is so typically Chinese. Confucianism cannot be classified as a religion. It has, however, religious elements in it and includes religious institutions, too. Nor is it merely an ethical system, although it is preponderantly so. It is the culture of the Chinese people."

The treatment of the Confucian classics is masterly. He recognizes that not everything now so spoken of came from the pen of Confucius. There is a higher criticism even of Chinese classics! He distinguishes between various strains brought in from different geographical areas, and by different scholars. But he realizes that the popular mind does not draw the close distinctions that scholars do and broadly classifies everything as Confucian. We have often heard our Chinese evangelists in outdoor preaching to a crowd tell them that the God we preach is the one Confucius believed in, and that he spoke of Shangti, when the quotation they make from the classics to prove it is by one of the other writers. Confucius never used this word for God but stuck to the impersonal term "Heaven." But I have never heard the evangelists' statements disputed.

While admiring the good points Dr. Wei is not oblivious to the weaknesses of Confucianism. His contrast between the way Confucius is said to have spoken as he was about to die and Buddha's calm meeting of the last foe is striking. It is to the disadvantage of Confucianism that it has no word of hope for the future. And as to salvation, the author presents a sharp contrast between the naturalistic school of Confucius' disciple, Hsun-tzu, and Amitabha Buddha. Hsun-tzu said, "How can obeying Heaven and praising it be as good as adapting one's self to the appointments of Heaven and using them? Therefore, if a person neglects what man can do and

seeks for what Heaven does, he fails to understand the nature of things." On the other hand thousands of Buddhists daily recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, believing that in virtue of his vow, reciting his name even as few as ten times before death will make his vow efficacious in saving them. So Buddhism has supplied a suggestion of man's inability to meet God's demands and the possibility of salvation through the work of another. This is a helpful directive away from the idea so common in China, as in America, that it is all right if you do your best to live a decent life.

But Buddhism in its philosophy is for the recluse and in its spirit it is anti-social. Taoism, with its divination and rites for the dead, came in in the early centuries of the Christian era to supply a lack of the spiritual element in Confucianism. But although Taoism is quite a force in the minds and life of the ordinary people, it remains true that Confucianism is at the center of Chinese culture and is "the Magna Charta of the Chinese people socially as well as politically."

Of course, Chinese do not choose between these religions. All three can be embraced at the same time. In expressing this the author says "it is a mistake to say the Chinese have tolerance; it is religious indifference" (pp. 135-36). This would seem to contradict what he says elsewhere, "People who speak of Chinese people as being not religious have a strange conception of what religion is" (p. 145). But apparently what he means by indifference is not religious apathy but indiscriminating inconsistency.

In his chapter on interpretation of Christianity in terms of Chinese culture he makes very valuable suggestions for the missionary, both in his delineation of Chinese characteristics and in the suggestions of the Christian's attitude toward the Chinese culture. It should not be destructive nor even comparative. It should not be presumptive, realizing that we in the West have not yet become fully Christian in our application of Christianity to life.

As a symmetrical counterpart to his four-center development of Confucian culture, he suggests a four-center church plan: a cell or local church group, a center where social service is conducted by several churches together, a center for developing Christian thought, the Christian college, and a center where in a beautifully situated spot, graves of important leaders, a museum of relics, books etc. should invite pilgrimage. The last item may seem strange. Buddhist pilgrimages to holy places are for inspiration rather than merit as Mohammedan ones are. Even so, too much emphasis on this would be fraught with danger. But in overcoming the hold of the clan, which is the great obstacle to Christianity, various ways of emphasizing a wider fellowship are worthy of study. And, of course, pilgrimages to Jerusalem did occupy an important place in the religious life of the Jews.

This is certainly a book which every one desiring to understand Chinese life and thought should read, and one which no one engaged in missionary work in China should be without.

—H. P. DE PREE.

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